

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20502

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MEMORANDUM TO ALL FEDERAL RESEARCH AGENCY HEADS

FROM: JOHN H. MARBURGER, III 
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SUBJECT: Policy concerning the treatment of Principal Investigators

Background: In 2003, the National Science and Technology Council, through the Committee on Science, Research Business Models (RBM) Subcommittee, collected public comment on policy implications of the changing nature of scientific research, particularly multidisciplinary and collaborative research. Among other issues, the public comments indicated that many scientific projects now involve more than a single contributing scientist and some have a compelling need for more than one principal investigator (PI) to manage the effort. Moreover, the collaborators are often from different institutions. Careers of these investigators are driven by credit for the work performed, and we should strive to recognize contributors across disciplines and institutions. Current policy at some agencies, however, prohibits multiple PIs, and therefore credit for work is not accurately reflected or assigned.

A working group of the RBM Subcommittee has deliberated this issue and recommended to the Committee on Science at their meeting on October 7 that it would be highly desirable to develop agency specific policy to acknowledge multiple investigators as appropriate on research awards (grants and contracts.) The following policy statement is consistent with this recommendation.

Policy: All federal research agencies should accommodate the recognition of two or more Principal Investigators on research projects (grants and contracts). This policy does not replace the use of a single Principal Investigator when that is most appropriate for the project. It establishes the appropriateness of multiple principal investigators in this era of complex multi-disciplinary research.

Next Steps: The RBM Subcommittee is establishing a working group of federal representatives appointed by each of its participating agencies (see attached.) The working group will develop an implementation strategy that meets the needs of both the research community and the funding agencies.

Progress in implementing this policy will be assessed by the rate of completion of agency specific policies and publication of that guidance in the RBM Toolkit.